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AUTHOR Abdal-Haqq, Ismat
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ABSTRACT

This digest provides a brief overview of the work of several influential standards-setting bodies established during the last decade and summarizes the primary ways in which classroom teachers participate in deriving, testing, implementing, and evaluating standards. The federal government is helping to shape the movement to develop rigorous content, performance, and delivery standards through legislation, such as the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, and through financial support of standards development projects. Other influential organizations involved in standards development include professional associations, such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. In order to acquire a broad base of support for their efforts, most of the major standards development projects in recent years have attempted to involve significant stakeholders in U.S. education, including teachers, in the process. Teacher involvement in professional standards development includes: (1) authoring standards; (2) serving as field test subjects; (3) translating content standards into classroom lessons; (4) initiating standards-setting projects; and (5) monitoring and assessing standards-setting efforts. (Contains 23 references.) (IAH)

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PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT: TEACHER INVOLVEMENT

ERIC DIGEST June 1995

by

Ismat Abdal-Haqq

ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education
One Dupont Circle
Suite 610
Washington, DC 20036-1186

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Professional Standards Development: Teacher Involvement

Ismat Abdal-Haqq

During the last decade, the U.S. education community witnessed a proliferation of standards-driven reform efforts. The primary objectives of these efforts have been (1) to increase student achievement to a level that is competitive with that of other industrialized nations (Shanker, 1994); (2) to restore public confidence in education (Edmundson, 1993); and (3) to maximize the potential of all children for success (*What Goals 2000 Means*, 1994). This digest provides a brief overview of the work of several influential standards-setting bodies and summarizes the primary ways in which classroom teachers are involved.

National Standards-Setting Efforts

The federal government has been a prominent player in the standards-driven reform movement. In March 1994, President Clinton signed the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act." This legislation creates a framework that states can adopt to construct reform stategies, which incorporate three Goals principles: rigorous academic standards; alignment of curriculum, textbooks, and teacher education; and clear incentives to encourage students to strive to meet high standards (*School Reform*, 1994) .

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) has made grants to 23 states to develop standards and curriculum frameworks in certain critical subjects (*Federal Initiatives*, 1994).

In addition, ED has supported or is currently supporting seven projects, led by professional associations, to develop model standards in seven "challenging" subject areas: science, history, the arts, civics and govenment, geography, English language arts, and foreign languages (*Standards for All*, 1993). It is expected that model standards will emerge from these projects by the end of 1995 (*Federal Initiatives*, 1994). Model standards in the arts and geography were published in 1994, and drafts of documents in history, foreign languages, and science have been circulated (*Making Use of National Standards*, 1994). The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) led the way in the development of content and performance standards with the publication of *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards* in 1989 and *Professional Standards for Teaching Mathematics* in 1991 (Ball, 1992).

In 1987, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) was formed to articulate standards of excellence, related to what teachers should know and be able to do (Baratz-Snowden, 1993). NBPTS has developed an assessment sytem that is used to determine eligibility for National Board certification. The first of these assessments will be available nationwide during 1994-1995 (*State Legislatures*, 1994). Although National Board certification is voluntary, a number of states have incorporated NBPTS standards into their school improvement plans.

The Council of Chief State School Officers established the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) to produce model standards for initial teacher licensure. INTASC standards are based on NBPTS standards (Baratz-Snowden, 1994).

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) began to use revised accreditation standards for teacher education institutions in 1987. The latest NCATE standards (*NCATE Announces*, 1994) also reflect NBPTS standards (Baratz-Snowden, 1994) and call for higher admissions, performance, and graduation standards (Wise, 1994). NCATE also encourages teacher preparation institutions to link their programs to content standards that have emerged from projects such as the NCTM's (Wise, 1994).

There are three types of national standards that are receiving attention: **content standards**, which focus on curriculum; **performance standards**, which focus on student work and assessment; and **school delivery standards**, which focus on resources and support for schools, teachers, and children (O'Neil, 1993). A major concern of those involved in developing standards, as well as of administrators and practitioners, is how to mesh, in a relatively seamless fashion, the multitude of content, performance, and school delivery standards that are emerging (*Changing the System*, 1992). NCATE recently received a grant from the Carnegie Corporation to launch the New Professional Teacher Project to link K-12 subject-matter standards to teacher preparation standards and to establish performance standards for teacher preparation and licensure (*NCATE Announces*, 1994).

Teacher Involvement

Consensus-building figures prominently in the current standards-setting movement (Ball, 1992; *Standards for All*, 1993). Kendall and Marzano (1994) suggest that, in the past, schools and teachers have had de facto standards for content areas set for them by textbook manufacturers and performance standards set by testing companies. In contrast, most of the major standards development projects in recent years have attempted to acquire a broad base of support for their work by involving representatives of the major stakeholders in U.S. education (*Standards for All*, 1993 ; Sykes & Plastrik, 1993): subject-matter experts, policymakers, teacher educators, parents, and teachers. Teacher involvement in professional standards development can be seen in several areas.

- *Teachers are functioning as authors of standards.* A majority of the members of the NBPTS standards committees are highly accomplished teachers (Baratz-Snowden, 1992; Baratz-Snowden, 1993). Eleven states have established autonomous professional standards boards, responsible for setting standards and licensing teachers and administrators;

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typically, at least half of the boards' members are teachers (Suarez, Polen, & Gottovi, 1994). Classroom teachers are members of NCATE's boards and Standards Committee and serve on teams that evaluate teacher preparation programs (Wise, 1994). The New Standards Project, which is working to develop assessment standards and instruments for a voluntary national system of student examination, heavily engages teachers in developing tasks (test items), developing and refining content standards, and scoring and interpreting student responses (Brosnan & Hartog, 1993; O'Neil, 1993).

• *Teachers are serving as subjects in field tests of new standards.* Five hundred-thirty-nine teachers participated in NBPTS field tests (*Update on Field Test*, 1994). INTASC assessments are also being piloted with teachers.

• *Teachers are instrumental in translating content standards into teachable classroom lessons.* Working with scholars, teachers build content standards into state curriculum frameworks and devise lesson plans to operationalize the standards (Gagnon, 1994; Richardson, 1994).

• Through their bargaining units and professional associations, teachers are initiating standards-*setting projects.* For example, Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students was concurrently developed by the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education (Brosnan & Hartog, 1993).

• *Teachers have oversight functions and serve as critics of national standards-setting efforts.* The seven model standards development projects supported by ED circulate drafts of their standards documents and solicit comment from teachers, as well as from parents and others. Teachers also sit on panels that oversee the projects' work (*Standards for All*, 1993).

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education
1-800-822-9229 ericsp@inet.ed.gov

Mary E. Dilworth, Director
Judy A. Beck, Associate Director
Ismat Abdal-Haqq, Author

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